



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 30 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
30 DECEMBER 1968

1. South Vietnam

Ky's return to Paris may be de-
layed. [REDACTED]

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It seems unlikely that Ky has
given up altogether [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] It [REDACTED] is pos-
sible that Ky, with Thieu's agreement,
may have decided to wait out the last
days of the Johnson administration in
Saigon.

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2. Portugal

In the press conference Friday,
in which he announced Portugal's readi-
ness to reopen the Azores base negoti-
ations, Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira
claimed that Lisbon has a "right to de-
mand that others cooperate" with Portu-
gal's African policies. This is the
most explicit warning yet that the Por-
tuguese will be trying to use the Azores
base as a lever to get US backing for
their activities in Africa. Our embassy
believes that the Portuguese think
world opinion in general--and the views
of the new US administration in particu-
lar--will be more sympathetic to them
in the future.

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3. Brazil

The Brazilian National Security Council has scheduled one of its rare meetings for today. Normally the council meets only to ratify decisions made by the executive.

We know that Costa e Silva has been under pressure from many sides to get off the dime and do something, but we have no word on what the council will be asked to approve. Today's meeting should provide a clearer view of the relative strength of the various groups competing for influence and whether Costa e Silva is being pushed another step toward undisguised military dictatorship.

4. Arab States - Israel

The Israeli raid on Beirut airport may produce more Lebanese-based terrorist activity rather than less. The Lebanese populace is in an ugly mood, and the government--which lacks the means to attack Israel directly--will probably relieve its frustration by halting its efforts to rein in the local terrorists.

Harsh reactions can be expected elsewhere in the Arab world as well. The US, with the announcement of the sale of Phantoms fresh in Arab memories, will come in for a good part of the blame for the Israeli reprisal.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

30 December 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Speeds Packages to US POWs:

Hanoi is following through on its announcement that US prisoners in North Vietnam could receive Christmas packages this year.

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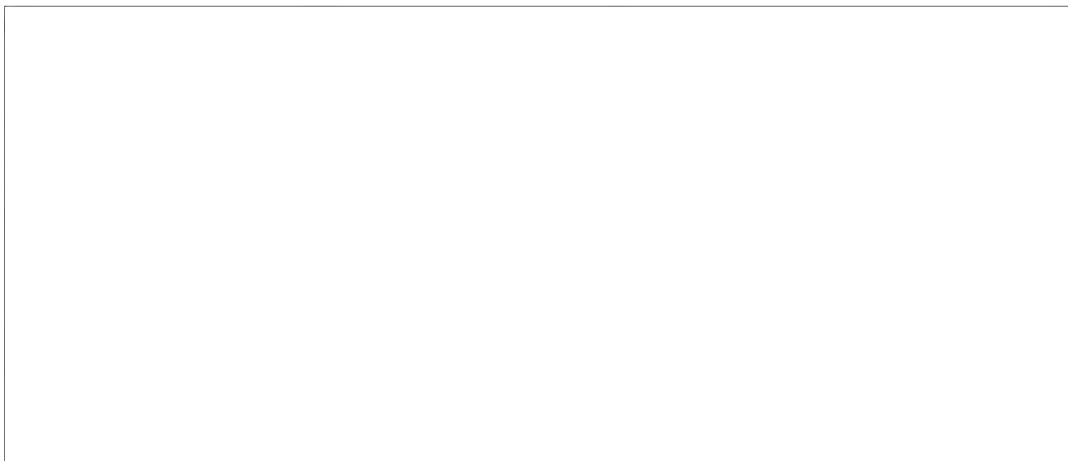
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Liberation Front Man Sees Debré: The 26 December call on Foreign Minister Debré by Tran Buu Kiem, chief Liberation Front delegate in Paris, was mainly a "courtesy" visit, according to a French Foreign Ministry official. He described the call as in keeping with France's policy of according equal treatment to all four delegations to the talks in Paris. Though plausible and correct in terms of protocol, this position obviously suits the Communists and feeds South Vietnamese fears about French intentions.

Tran Buu Kiem evidently made a standard propaganda pitch during the visit with Debré, including the stress on the need for a "peace cabinet" in Saigon pending the establishment of a coalition government. He would not be drawn out on what personalities or political elements would be acceptable to the Communists, but insisted that President Thieu, Vice President Ky, and Prime Minister Huong must all be removed.

The French official relaying this to a US Embassy officer said that press reports about Debré telling Kiem that France was prepared to aid in postwar reconstruction in Vietnam should not be construed as a substantive commitment to the Communists. He described them as remarks made out of courtesy which parallel similar assurances to the US.

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Repairs to North Vietnamese Power Plants: The North Vietnamese have made extensive repairs to three of their major thermal power plants.

Construction efforts at the Hanoi Thermal Power Plant are apparently intended to provide protection from air strikes.

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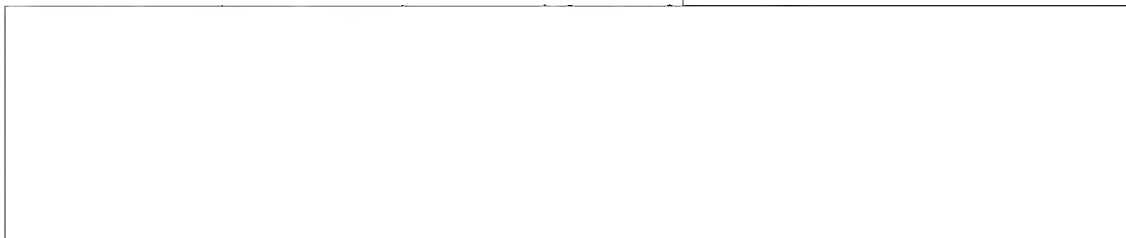
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Similar construction is under way at the Haiphong Thermal Power Plant West.

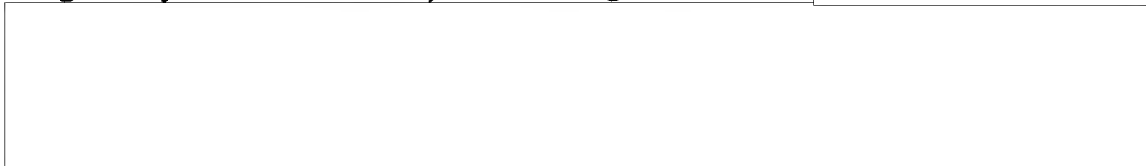
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The Thanh Hoa Thermal Power Plant, heavily damaged by air strikes, is being restored.

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Transportation in Hanoi-Haiphong Area: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] in Hanoi reports all damage to major rail lines in the Hanoi-Haiphong area has been repaired. Work is going forward on an alternate railroad between Hanoi and the port city [REDACTED].

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Rail traffic in and out of Hanoi is heavy and mostly freight. Some damaged equipment is coming up from the south, however. Highways are being resurfaced [REDACTED] and many new trucks are to be seen.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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